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Common purpose, shared planet

The UN climate deal was an important diplomatic victory. But its implementation, like its origins, will be fuelled by people driving change through everyday political, social and economic actions

By **Liza Henshaw**, Chief Operating Officer, Global Citizen

The Paris Agreement was negotiated by a handful of individuals. The next stage of climate action, however, will be driven by tens of millions of people across the planet who believe that by coming together they can change the world.

These 'Global Citizens' will not just sit around and wait for their leaders to solve the world's biggest problems. Global

Citizens identify as exactly that – as citizens of the world and they see themselves as collectively responsible for all human prosperity and the stewardship of our precious planet.

Global Citizens are taking, and will continue to take, small and large actions to improve the lives of all people, regardless of racial or religious lines and geographical borders. We understand to lift people out of poverty, to provide access to clean water, to provide education and gender equality

and to curb climate change, will require the actions of all of us.

This unity of purpose is a generational change. We have lost faith that politicians and policymakers will be able to change the world. We question whether they even want to improve the world for all people as we watch them devote their energies to

▲ London the day before COP21 began in Paris. Citizens of the world cannot stand back, hoping that politicians will solve the big issues – they must drive the change

► March 2016, collecting water from shallow wells dug in the river bed in Somalia's drought-afflicted Shabelle region. Eradicating poverty will require action from us all

re-election and self-preservation. It is our job, our responsibility as Global Citizens to take action to lift people out of poverty while protecting the planet and preserving its natural resources.

We never bought into the so-called climate change debate – for us the science was always settled. Global average temperatures have risen almost every year of our lives and this is due to human activity. Reliance on fossil fuels must be reduced, renewables are our future, technology is part of the solution and individual choice matters.

A life with purpose

Individual action has become the cornerstone of living a life with purpose. We all know that bringing our own shopping bags to the supermarket will not save the planet, but we do it anyway because each small action is part of a larger commitment to respecting the finite resources available. We eat less or in some cases no meat; we care if the fish on our plate is sustainably caught; we buy fairtrade goods – we actually care about our purchases.

How our goods and services are created and sourced means more to us than just the accumulation of stuff. We reject the 'keep up with the Joneses' consumerism of the 1980s and 1990s and instead value



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fuel investments. One can argue whether or not this had any impact on climate change, and whether or not this is an effective method to bring about social change. But what does seem very evident is that our actions demonstrated our power to demand – and get – a response.

tweets, I hear you and I will make good on my promises for global education, poverty alleviation and emissions reductions”, we know we have made an impact on the world's most pressing problems.

We see these seemingly insurmountable problems as new challenges to solve. The idea that climate change is too big to tackle is ridiculous. We hold in our back pocket more technology than the first astronauts had on Apollo 11. Each day we see more solar panels, more wind turbines, more fuel-efficient cars, more energy financing, longer battery storage, and more energy-efficient products. Progress is being made in all corners of the world: complacency is the enemy; collective actions are the solution.

Our movement has generated 7.2 million actions from Global Citizens over the last four years, which are set to affect over 656 million lives. We did this one small action at a time. We have achieved much, but there is still much to do. And it is people – those Global Citizens around the world – who have the power to create this change. ●

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experiences, relationships and connections. In the ultimate gesture of eschewing the ownership culture, we created the shared economy so that everyone could have temporary access to a car, a vacation home and even a new dress for a night.

Along the way, our society started to see the impact we are having. On college campuses we were able to get huge endowment managers to divest of fossil-

We created petitions and have flooded government offices with phone calls, tweets and social media postings. Using Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat we have shown that everyone can be a publisher, that humour goes viral, and that small calls to action can garner huge followings.

Our actions have become a force to be reckoned with. When the Prime Minister of Norway or Italy says, “stop sending me